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Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 56/24 I of 29 November 2001, entitled "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels", the General Assembly decided to give urgent consideration to the issues involved in conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels and requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the subject and to submit a report to it at its fifty-seventh session.

2. Pursuant to that request, the Secretary-General, on 5 February 2002, sent a note verbale to all Member States requesting their views on the subject. To date, replies have been received from Bulgaria, El Salvador, Lebanon, Poland and Qatar. Any further replies received will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Member States

Bulgaria

[Original: English]
[1 May 2002]

1. The Bulgarian policy on conventional arms control plays an important role in the overall security policy of the country.

2. In recent years, the countries of South-Eastern Europe have achieved unprecedented progress in setting up a new, positive climate of cooperation, based on common values and interests. These positive tendencies became possible only after the collapse of the system of confrontation of blocs and the strengthening of confidence among the countries through increased transparency and predictability and new forms of regional cooperation. Facing new requirements to cooperate and operate effectively and to better prepare for the challenges to security, the countries of South-Eastern Europe have established new patterns of partnership fostering the process of Euro-Atlantic integration. The adoption of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) and of the updated Vienna Document of the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-building Measures of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) played a crucial role in this respect.

3. Bulgaria has pursued a systematic regional policy of strengthening security and good-neighbourliness in South-Eastern Europe. A stable network for high-level consultations has been created to serve as a practical measure for strengthening regional confidence and security. A good example of this is the initiative for meetings of the Ministers of Defence and of Foreign Affairs, the Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs of the General Staffs, etc. There are valuable and tangible results from the South-eastern Europe Defence Ministerial process, in particular the Multinational Peace Force in South-eastern Europe, which currently has its headquarters in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

4. The Republic of Bulgaria has participated in the negotiations on confidence- and security-building measures and arms control, provided for in the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dayton Peace Agreement), which ended successfully in July 2001 with the adoption of a Concluding Document under article V of annex 1-B to the Dayton Peace Agreement. The goal of the negotiations was to further develop the objectives of the Agreement for Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria renders methodological support to the countries parties to the Agreement in carrying out their duties during evaluation visits and inspections. Furthermore, the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria participates in this process through its representatives in the evaluation visits and inspections and in the accompanying groups as well.

5. The Concluding Document includes a number of measures that are voluntary in nature. The document itself is politically binding and came into effect on 1 January 2002. Among the measures adopted are: exchange of defence-related information; expansion of military contacts and cooperation; bringing the levels of military activity below those provided for in the 1999 Vienna Document; performance of additional inspections and evaluation visits; rendering financial, technical and other support in the process of demining and destruction of landmine stockpiles; obligation to join the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

6. Another example of regional security cooperation is the Agreement on the Establishment of the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR).

7. Seeking to cope with new dynamics in the fundamentally changed strategic environment and in order to enhance the processes of establishing regional security and collaboration, the South-east Europe Common Assessment Paper on Regional Security Challenges and Opportunities (SEECAP) was developed. The document sets out the perceptions and future plans for shaping the environment in the region.

8. In the context of the recent crisis in the Western Balkans, the problem of the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons has emerged on the regional security agenda as a serious one.

9. Guided by the principle of regional ownership of the Stability Pact and in line with Euro-Atlantic principles and values, Bulgaria has been and will continue to be a promoter of regional cooperation in this field in South-Eastern Europe and is ready to support the efforts of the international community aimed at curbing the uncontrolled proliferation and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons in areas of conflict of the Western Balkans.

10. In December 1999, under the auspices of the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe and with the valuable support of the Government of the United States of America, Bulgaria initiated and hosted a Regional Conference on Export Control in which 12 countries from South-Eastern and Central Europe participated. The Conference adopted two documents of particular importance, a Joint Declaration on Responsible Arms Transfers and a Statement on Harmonization of End-Use/End-User Certificates. Bulgaria continues to consider these two widely accepted and recognized documents, in enhancing national export control systems and upgrading them to European standards, to be a valuable and credible contribution to regional stability. This concrete step, though not implemented to its fullest potential, has contributed to the strengthening of the process of regional cooperation in the areas of the prevention of illicit arms trafficking and export control of arms and dual-use goods and technologies. These documents are open for accession by all interested States which have not yet done so.

11. The existing system of bilateral and multilateral agreements and arrangements between the countries of the region successfully stimulates the processes of enhanced trust and partnership aimed at strengthening openness in the military sphere and avoiding the risks of the use of force. Bilateral agreements aimed at strengthening the process of confidence- and security-building measures have been signed between the Defence Ministries of the Republic of Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece and Romania. These agreements are in the spirit of the 1999 Vienna Document and establish the minimal levels of notification and observation of military activity in areas adjacent to their common borders with each State. An obligation to accept an additional number of visits for assessment of the information exchanged pursuant to the 1999 Vienna Document is provided for in the agreements.

12. In March 1999, the Governments of Bulgaria and Turkey signed a bilateral Agreement on the non-use of anti-personnel mines and their removal from and destruction in the areas adjacent to their common borders. On 30 January 2002, Bulgaria and Turkey exchanged documents of ratification of this bilateral Agreement. The Agreement comes into force on 1 May 2002. It provides that the destruction of the mines in the areas adjacent to the common borders shall be completed within a period of six years. Ninety days after the entry into force of the Agreement, initial information on the location of the anti-personnel mines and their number will be exchanged. This information as well as the process of the removal and destruction of the anti-personnel mines will be monitored through annual surveillance visits.

13. A Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC) was established with headquarters in Zagreb as a quick-start project under Working Table III (Security issues) of the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe. Working Table III is aimed at creating a climate of confidence and security throughout South-Eastern Europe by enhancing transparency, openness and predictability in the field of military security, as well as cooperation and a broad security dialogue among the participating States.

14. Bulgaria supported the creation of the Centre and committed itself to provide lecturers and experts for the education and training of Centre personnel and inspectors from the States of the region.

15. Delegations from all Black Sea countries took part in negotiations on confidence- and security-

building measures in the naval field in the Black Sea area. The negotiations were successfully concluded on 1 November 2001 with the adoption of a draft Document on confidence- and security-building measures in the naval field in the Black Sea area. The Document was approved by a decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria on 11 April 2002. The participating States adopted the Document by joint declaration in Kiev on 25 April 2002. The Document will be implemented as of 1 January 2003. The agreement provides for measures for: cooperation in the naval field; military contacts and visits to naval bases; exchange of naval information; and annual naval exercises.

El Salvador

[Original: Spanish]
[29 April 2002]

Pursuant to this resolution, El Salvador ratified the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions through Legislative Decree No. 694, of 19 December 2001, published in *Diario Oficial* No. 14 of 22 January 2002, as a result of which its recommendations are applicable throughout the national territory.

Lebanon

[Original: English]
[24 April 2002]

Lebanon is not a manufacturer of light or small weapons and hence does not periodically publish information on their production, export, import or control. Lebanon supports all international instruments addressing this issue, whether to combat it or eradicate it. Further, Lebanon reaffirms its commitment to respect international standards and systems used in improving the field of information and telecommunications, increasing international information security systems and preventing their misuse in any way. Finally, Lebanon does not possess any kind of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons that violate environmental norms and is committed to the conservation of the environment in accordance with international standards.

Poland

[Original: English]
[9 May 2002]

1. Poland is a party to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) and the Treaty on Open Skies and is a participating State in other conventional arms control agreements concluded within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, including the Vienna Document 1999. All of those agreements form an all-European arms control regime based on the principles of cooperation, openness, transparency, verification, limitations and constraints. Such a regime incorporates also specific regional arms control arrangements on additional confidence- and security-building measures. Together, they constitute an essential element of cooperative European security and will continue to remain an important tool for strengthening security as long as military and security risks exist, although they may be different in nature and scope from those of the past.

2. Poland is deeply committed to the United Nations idea of promoting agreements to strengthen regional peace and security at the lowest level of armaments. An excellent example in this respect, which could be used in considering such efforts, is the history of the negotiation and the content of the CFE Treaty, as well as its implementation. The Treaty brought about the destruction of more than 59,000 pieces of military equipment and, through its verification and information exchange regimes, created a climate of transparency and predictability in the military field. The force reductions mandated by the CFE Treaty significantly enhanced stability by eliminating the capability for surprise attack and large-scale offensive action. The CFE Treaty proved to be also not only a routine agreement on arms control and armament reductions, but in principle, an instrument of stability and the promotion of the rule of law in the military sphere in Europe.

3. The CFE Treaty has been complemented by the confidence- and security-building measures stipulated in the Vienna Document 1992, further developed in the Vienna Document 1994 and 1999. Since the beginning of the year 2002, the conventional arms control regime has been strengthened by the entry into force of the Treaty on Open Skies.

4. Poland, with its positive experience of the results of the implementation of the European conventional arms control regime, strongly encourages other States beyond Europe to begin negotiations on these kinds of agreements. For our part, we are ready to share with interested States our experiences gained during the negotiation and implementation of these conventional arms control agreements.

Qatar

[Original: English]
[29 April 2002]

The State of Qatar proposes the convening of a workshop for Member States through the Department of Disarmament Affairs aiming at limiting small arms and light weapons, or that the matter be included in the agenda of the proposed meeting which was decided to be held every two years, starting in 2003.